Furnishings

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Furnishings are elements added to a building for utility or ornamentation following construction. These include furniture such as chairs, desks, sofas and tables, and also cabinetry, window treatments, signage, and accessories. This chapter addresses the basic furnishing elements which are part of a comprehensive interior design package.

Furniture

When selecting the furnishings for an interior environment, care should be taken to include their design as an integral part of the overall concept and to ensure coherency between architecture, materials, furniture, art, and signage.

Furnishings may be classified into three major groups: residential, institutional, and contract. Each group is distinguished by the intent, extent, and duration of use.

Residential furnishings are generally lightly constructed. They are smaller in scale than contract furnishings, and are designed to fit smaller-scale residential spaces.

Institutional furnishings are designed for areas where heavy use or abuse are anticipated: hospitals, schools, correctional facilities, sports facilities, etc. They are characterized by easily-cleaned fabric, mar-resistant surfaces, and heavy construction.

Contract furnishings fall between residential and institutional. They are constructed to withstand extended use, but not abuse. They are typically used for corporate design in offices, reception areas, and boardrooms, but transition well to high-end residential settings.

Contract Furniture - Seating

Contract seating can be differentiated into four common classes: multiple seating, lounge chairs, side chairs, and desk/conference chairs. **Multiple seating** (Fig. 1) refers to seating groups often times ganged together to form a single unit. Individual chairs can have ganging mechanisms to allow flexibility in number and installation. Multiple seating is used primarily in waiting areas and assembly rooms. **Lounge seating** (Fig. 2) is designed for comfort and aesthetics. Sofas and lounge chairs are typically fully upholstered and can be used in many areas—executive offices, lobbies, boardrooms, reception areas, etc. **Side chairs** (Fig. 3) are accessory

chairs for offices and workstations. Also called guest chairs; side chairs are used for guest seating in offices or

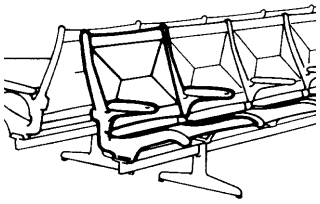

Fig. 1 Multiple seating

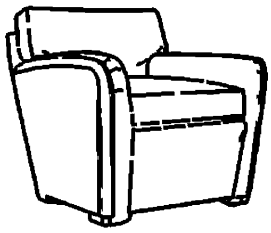

Fig. 2 Lounge seating

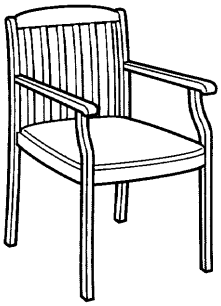

Fig. 3 Side chair

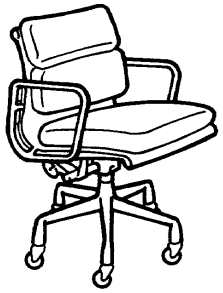

Fig. 4 Desk/conference chair

at workstations. Smaller in scale than lounge seating, they may or may not have arms, and as options may have upholstered seats, backs, or arms.

Desk/conference chairs (Fig. 4) are specifically designed to respond to ergonomics—the relationship between the work, the work conditions, and the worker. Ergonomic seating contributes to healthy, comfortable, adjustable support by providing appropriate posture, motion, and size for people and their tasks. Ergonomic seating can be passive or active. **Passive ergonomic** seating encourages proper body position through fixed construction. **Active ergonomic** seating allows the user of the chair to adjust his position via a control mechanism, such as pneumatic lift or sliding seat pan.

Given the multiplicity of functions among different types of seating, proper selection requires careful consideration of the influencing factors of space, function, and occupancy including:

Seating design depends on a number of situational factors.

- nature of the space,
- function of the space,
- physical characteristics of the individual user,

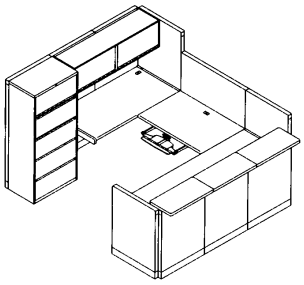

Fig. 7 Systems furniture

- frequency and duration of use,
- desired image or design intent, and
- anticipated maintenance program.

Casegoods

Casegoods are furniture elements constructed from box-like components. These include desks, credenzas, file cabinets, etc. Casegoods fall under two major categories: conventional and modular. **Conventional casegoods** (Fig. 5) come pre-assembled as finished, ready-to-use products. Desks, bookcases, display cases, and lecterns may all be gotten as conventional casegoods.

Modular casegoods (Fig. 6) are manufactured as separate pieces which may be grouped into a number of different arrangements. Desks and workstations are assembled from pedestals, work surfaces, credenzas, and filing cabinets.

Storage units such as file cabinets are a type of modular casegood which may be utilized to make up storage walls or room dividers as well. Modular assemblies may be room height for privacy or counter height for openness. Either way, they serve as a partition while providing storage from one or both sides.

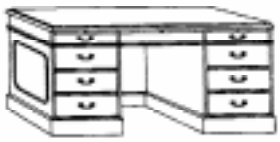

Fig. 5 Conventional casegoods

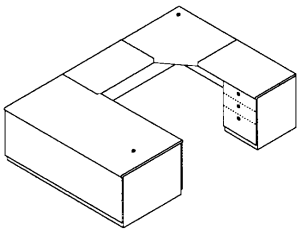

Fig. 6 Modular casegoods

In selecting storage furniture, whether conventional or modular, what will be stored and aesthetic quality each play a part in determining the appropriate pieces. Storage furniture comes with a wide variety of options: open shelves, hinged or sliding doors, and various drawer arrangements. Different components can be grouped together to suit different needs. Modern storage systems often incorporate elements to serve special purposes: food service, audio-visual equipment storage, or display.

Systems furniture (Fig. 7) refers to modular components and panel elements that can be linked

together to form individual workstations or group work areas. Primarily intended for office use, systems furniture provides flexibility and multiplicity of function.

Systems furniture design varies by manufacturer, but some common characteristics do exist. It typically consists of vertical panels, horizontal worksurfaces, and storage units that can be arranged in a variety of configurations. By using vertical elements to support numerous components and provide a common data/electrical conduit, systems furniture achieves an economy surpassing most other furniture options. Systems furniture components may be post-supported, panel-hung, or wall-mounted.

Systems furniture can be supplied with electricity to support varying work tasks.

Systems are flexible in nature and can be rearranged to fit the needs of the user. They may be used to provide open or closed areas, and to accommodate one or more users. They can be located within closed rooms or open office environments. A systems furniture grouping around an individual is generally referred to as a workstation. Multiple workstations may be assembled into larger units, referred to as workgroups, to enhance economy, user communication, and productivity.

Electrical power distribution may be integrated within a systems panel or component, permitting electrical equipment to be plugged directly into the systems furniture. Internal raceways conceal wiring. Power connectors permit one workstation to be plugged into the next. The hidden raceways may contain electrical power, telephone cabling and computer wiring. Lighting fixtures to provide either ambient or task lighting may also be incorporated as optional components in the systems furniture.

Systems furniture specifications include various modular component pieces for panels and worksurfaces as well as power and communications systems, panel acoustics, and material finishes. Specifying the different products available from the various systems manufacturers requires detailed effort from the designer.

Custom Casegoods

Casegoods fall into three quality levels as determined by the American Woodworker's Institute (AWI). Budget, use, and aesthetics each play a part in determining which grade most suits a given project. Many characteristics differentiate between the premium, custom, and economy grades of casegoods. A few key characteristics are listed here.

- **Premium grade** (Fig. 8) refers to the highest quality of architectural woodwork. Usually reserved for feature areas or high-end projects, premium grade calls for continuous grain matching of veneer segments, quality finishes inside and out, and superior craftsmanship.

- **Custom grade** (Fig. 9), the most common for architectural millwork, requires limited grain matching of veneers and durable, quality construction and finishes.

- **Economy grade** (Fig. 10) defines the minimum acceptable level of quality within AWI standards. It requires no grain matching of veneered components and generally describes a commodity product.

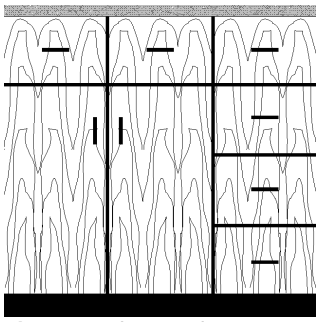
Fig. 8 Premium grade

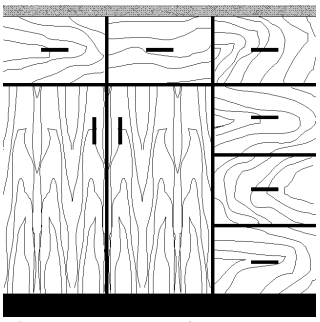
Fig. 9 Custom grade

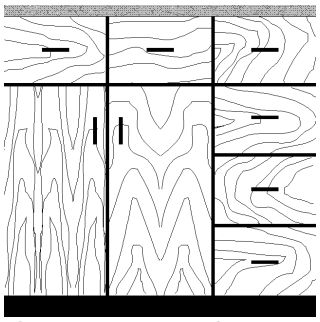
Fig. 10 Economy grade

Window Treatment

Window treatments serve many purposes in an interior environment. They can provide privacy, light and sun control, reduced energy consumption (by preventing heat loss or gain), and decreased sound transmission. The type of treatment, as well as the type of material used, will determine the effectiveness of the treatment in any given instance. Sheer, semi-sheer, or casement fabrics will provide minimum privacy, shade, and energy

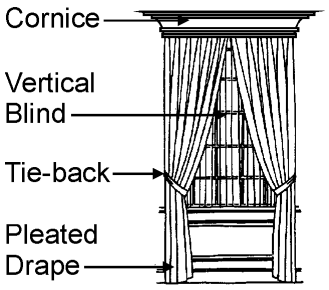

Fig. 11 Mixed window treatment

savings; heavy, opaque fabrics and hard treatments provide greater effect. Full, soft treatments will absorb more sound than hard treatments.

Window treatments should complement and support the interior design of a space. In addition, window treatments also add flexibility in the design, conceal architectural defects, or change the apparent size, shape, and character of a room (Fig. 11). Choices should be made based upon the elements and principles of good design as discussed in Chapter 4. Other factors to take into consideration include the structural characteristics of a space, exterior appearance, architectural style, and historical context.

Window treatments can be classified into three basic categories: soft, hard, and top.

Soft window treatments include those which are generally made of soft fabrics: curtains, draperies and shades. Both **curtains** and **draperies** are fabric panels which are generally pleated and hung on a rod over a window. Draperies tend to be more formal than curtains, usually consisting of several layers of panels. **Shades** typically consist of fabric panels designed to be raised and lowered.

The wide range of styles, along with limitless fabric options, make soft window treatments extremely flexible.

Hard window treatments are constructed from rigid materials and include shutters and blinds. **Shutters**, typically constructed from wood, consist of either a solid panel of wood, or wood louvers, within a stile and rail frame. They come in a variety of sizes, designs and finishes.

Blinds are available as horizontal or vertical slats of wood, aluminum, or plastic; and may have fabric or paper inserts. Blinds are effective for view, light, and air control. If desired, they can be completely hidden behind other window treatments.

Horizontal blinds have slats that run the width of the window; v**ertical blinds** have slats that run the height. By using a control wand or pull cord, blinds may be raised and lowered, or moved side to side, and the slats angled up, down, or side to side.

Top treatments refer to any window treatment applied to the top of either soft or hard window treatments. In addition to adding to the aesthetic of a window treatment and giving a window a more finished appearance, top treatments also may:

- screen the hardware and rod,
- improve window proportion and hide structural defects,
- increase apparent height or width of a window, or
- make different sized windows appear equal by altering their visual proportions.

Top treatments may be chosen from a wide variety of soft treatments and hard treatments. Soft top treatments are called **valances**. The term valance encompasses any shape and style of valance within the designer's imagination, and limitless fabric and rod options. Hard top treatments are called **cornices**. Cornices are often used for energy efficiency. An architectural member that connects to the wall, window frame or ceiling, cornices can be made into any shape and size and can be finished wood, fabric covered, or a combination of the two.

Selecting Window Treatments

Aesthetic and functional performance criteria are to be used when selecting window treatments for an interior space. As with textile fabric selection, window treatments should be evaluated on both appearance and serviceability factors.

Fiber properties for window coverings critically influence performance and durability. Density, elasticity, stiffness, sunlight and chemical resistance, color fastness, flame resistance, weight, energy conservation, light transmission, and reflectance all determine how a window covering will function in its environment.

To preserve the appearance and usefulness of the treatments, sagging and shrinkage should be minimized. Sagging could destroy the balance of laterally draping folds and cause the fabric to puddle on the floor. Shrinkage will do the opposite and cause the treatment to look improperly fit.

Mildew resistance needs to be considered when selecting window treatments. In many climates windows are a

point of moisture condensation and operable windows will expose the window treatment to weather.

Maintenance

Preventative maintenance is important in reducing deterioration of the fibers and preserving the original appearance of window coverings. Moisture poses the greatest concern to maintaining window treatments. Care should be taken to keep treatments from hanging in contact with moisture. Water may combine with soil present on fibers causing the fabric to stain. Water may also combine with pollutants and oily cooking fumes to form dilute acids that attack and weaken fibers. In spaces where this occurs, window treatments should be cleaned frequently to prevent accumulation of these pollutants.

Cleaning itself is an important maintenance concern for window treatments. Typically, textile window coverings should be cleaned by a professional cleaning service. Most such services offer removal and rehanging as optional services.

Hard window treatments should be vacuumed or dusted on a regular basis to avoid accumulation of dirt. These types of treatments tend to be more difficult to clean of built-up residue than soft treatments.

Signage/Graphics

Signage and graphics in interiors serve to inform and guide people. Signage may be informational, directional, or regulatory. **Informational signage** (Fig. 12) provides the user with information and includes room or area labels, bulletin boards, menus, artwork descriptions, and emergency information. **Directional signage** (Fig. 13) directs circulation and provides orientation. It includes entry directories, directional arrows and maps. The purpose of **regulatory signage** (Fig. 14) is control:

providing prohibitions, warnings, emergency instructions, and use restrictions.

Fig. 12 Informational signage

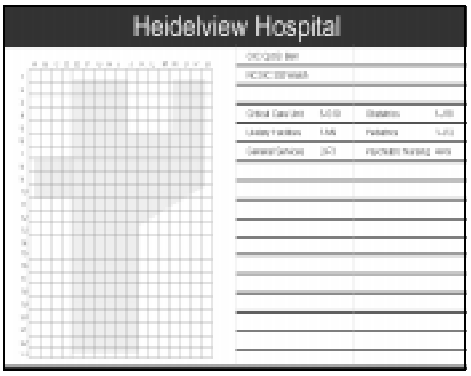

Fig. 13 Directional signage

Fig. 14 Regulatory signage

Whatever the intent of the signage, certain considerations should be addressed in preparing a signage package.

- Extent of signage package.
  - Are all sign types covered?
  - If not, how will excluded portions be addressed?

- Flexibility of signage package.
  - Does the system *allow* all types of signs to be addressed?
  - Does the signage system meet all regulatory requirements?
  - Does the system allow for future modifications as changes occur in the use of the facility?

- Quality of signage package.
  - Will the signage system stand up to anticipated use?
  - Is the signage cost within budget?

The interior designer's role in graphics design production may include such work as the design of menus, retail signs, and custom artwork creations. This work may be the in-house creation of the interior designer or it may be contracted to an independent designer.

Specific items need to be addressed in the specification of signage.

- Design (Many of these criteria are subject to specific regulation under guidelines such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.).
  - Graphics (How does signage relate to customer's image, logo, letterhead, etc.).
  - Typeface.
  - Size of copy.
  - Copy position.
  - Letter and line spacing.
  - Color.

- Scale drawings of each typical sign type.
- Construction and mounting details.
- Schedule of various sign types.
- Schedule of all text to be included on various sign types.

The need for illumination of signage and a graphics manual, describing the signage system and illustrating how to extend or modify it, are additional factors to take into consideration during the design of a signage package.

Accessories

Accessories may be either functional or decorative. Whatever the purpose, accessories serve to make a room appear less sterile and impersonal.

Functional accessories include letter trays, coat racks, lamps, glassware, magazine racks, brochure racks, and message boards. This group of accessories should be selected for utilitarian aspects as well as aesthetic qualities that may make a contribution to the total design concept. Repetitive elements can act as unifiers and help tie the accessories to the design scheme. Well-designed accessories do not have to be expensive to be visually effective in the space.

Audio visual (AV) equipment also falls under the category of functional accessories. AV equipment can be treated as part of the design or concealed within casegoods. AV equipment includes the following pieces:

- televisions (fixed screen or projection),
- portable sound systems for either speaking or entertainment,
- media players such as videocassette recorders (VCR's) and laser disc players.

Decorative accessories include utilitarian objects such as displays of product samples, and purely decorative objects such as artwork and plants. These elements may serve a secondary purpose or simply add a sense of freshness or uniqueness to an environment.

Art

An art program sets guidelines for the selection of artwork. Among the factors to be taken into consideration are:

- quality (posters, prints, original art),
- subject matter,
- medium (photography, paper, oil, etc.),
- size,
- placement,
- method of display (permanent collection or rotating program),
- lighting, and
- integration with design scheme.

The preparation of the artwork to be displayed and positioned in an interior space involves many important decisions. The designer must work closely with the user to determine placements that are satisfactory for both function and visual composition. Frame and mat must be selected to complement the artwork and interior design. Art should be carefully positioned for proper and comfortable viewing. Large works may be placed alone to create a dominant effect; small pictures may be grouped, or hung on a smaller wall surface. Proper lighting for viewing may be artificial or natural. Protection from abuse or deterioration is required for all art.

Art work has perhaps the greatest potential of any additive feature to alter our perception of a space, due to the immediacy of its communication.

Lighting of artwork may be either uniform or non-uniform. Uniform lighting for all vertical surfaces that will receive art gives prominence to the architecture. Viewers have the opportunity to select their own focus and to enjoy all pieces of art. Non-uniform lighting focuses light on individual objects while leaving the surroundings comparatively dark. This technique gives prominence to the art over the architecture, and, all else being equal, creates a more dramatic environment.

In a space where art is changed frequently, flexible lighting is most effective. Track systems are often selected because of ease of locating and aiming the luminaries as needed. With either method for lighting art, excellent color rendering is important for a proper appreciation of the objects. To achieve the objective of allowing the viewer to see the color in the art;

continuous spectrum, high Color Rendition Index sources are essential.

Other functions to consider in lighting art are the medium, surface texture, and type of frame or enclosure. Placement of the light source is crucial to minimizing problems with shadows from the frame and distortion of the object due to exaggerated texture.

The lighting of three-dimensional objects will affect the viewer's perception of these pieces. Concentrated beams create higher contrast and deep shadows, emphasizing form and texture. Lighting a vertical surface behind an object in addition to the object itself provides a luminous backdrop to separate the object visually from its background. Lighting from the side as well as from above provides added dimension to the piece.

Plants

Plants have become an important interior design element. They add color, texture, and variety of form and shape to the interior. They bring a natural element to an otherwise artificial environment. They are used as focal points, screening, and for psychological effect. Increasingly, plants are being incorporated into the interior environment for the health and well-being of the user, as well as enrichment of the space.

Fresh plants serve a healthful function by cleaning and freshening indoor air. They absorb noxious gases through tiny openings in the leaf surface and release oxygen and water vapor in return. Even a relatively small number of plants can do an effective job of cleaning the air.

When selecting plants, their light, water, and temperature needs, continuing care requirements, and ease of replacement must all be considered. The designer must consider the kinds and amount of light the space has—direct or indirect, daylight, fluorescent or incandescent. The ease with which plants can be watered is critical as well. Plants should not be positioned such that their location presents a problem in watering.

In general, low-light acclimated plants should be used in interior spaces. A plant maintenance program is highly

recommended for the survival and growth of plants in an interior environment, because they need consistent care. Plants must be sprayed for insects, pruned, fertilized, rotated, and polished on a regular basis. Some plants are toxic if eaten. Care must, therefore, be taken in selecting and locating plants in areas where small children and/or animals may be present.

Silk plants were developed to replace live plants in environments where growth and maintenance are inhibited. Quality silk plants look very much like real ones, but require far less maintenance. While they provide close to the same aesthetic effect, silk plants cannot provide air cleaning.

Plants add life to a space. Living plants also add vital elements to the environment and help to purify the air.

Plants should be selected which are appropriately scaled to the space in which they are placed. They should complement the design scheme functionally and aesthetically. Aesthetic considerations include foliage color, size, shape, and outline. A single well-placed plant may be very dramatic, almost abstract, while masses of plants arranged in a line might create the effect of a soft screen. Big bold plants are good for major effects or to fill a space where furniture does not fit; small ones can occupy a place of prominence on a table or window ledge.

The containers or planters in which plants are kept have much to do with both ornamental value and the health of the plant; but when the requirement for proper drainage, root spread, and soil aeration has been met, almost any container can be acceptable. Glazed and unglazed ceramics, metals, glass, and plastics can also provide liners for more decorative, less water resistant containers such as wicker or wood.